

III. Making It Work

- Models for interim foreign language programs
- Teacher certification
- Professional development
- Student opportunities
- Impacts of a K–16 program

An effective foreign language program begins in early elementary grades and progresses sequentially through grade twelve. The program includes the opportunity for daily instruction for every student in every grade by foreign language professionals who are proficient in the languages they teach and are trained in a variety of foreign language teaching methods and strategies. In support of such a program, educators have identified five goal areas that encompass and weave together the curricular elements of language study. These are communication, culture, connections, comparisons, and communities. The ultimate goal of all South Carolina schools is that students complete such a program and graduate “equipped linguistically and culturally to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad” (*Bringing the Standards into the Classroom*, 7).

Although budget constraints and personnel shortages may prevent such programs from being implemented immediately, school districts should not wait until the ideal program is possible before expanding foreign language education. Recruiting the support of local businesses, community leaders, and parents can help school districts to expand foreign language programs into grades K–12. Some schools find it practical to add one grade at a time, starting in an upper grade and working backward toward kindergarten. Others begin in kindergarten and work forward.

Following are suggested alternatives for interim programs. These in turn are followed by recommendations for improvements in the areas of teacher certification, professional development, and student opportunities—recommendations designed to further enhance foreign language education in the State, now and in the future.



An effective foreign language program includes

- the opportunity for daily instruction for every student in grades K–12,
- teachers with high levels of proficiency in the languages they teach, and
- high school graduates who are equipped linguistically and culturally to communicate successfully in the pluralistic American society.

Models for interim foreign language programs

Because a shortage of certified foreign language teachers is one of the greatest obstacles to expanded foreign language education, school districts need to look at alternative means of introducing temporary foreign language programs to students in elementary and middle schools. With some creativity, educators can use a variety of personnel and technological resources to develop such programs as these:

- *Personnel Sharing.* Districts can provide effective foreign language instruction and articulation by sharing personnel within and among schools.
 - *Itinerant teachers.* Itinerant teachers may be the best interim alternative until an effective full-scale program can be implemented.
 - *Secondary teachers.* Secondary teachers who have adequate additional training in teaching foreign languages to younger students can devote part of their regular teaching schedule to working in middle or elementary classrooms.
 - *Elementary teachers.* A core of foreign language courses and an elementary foreign language methods course must be added to teacher preparation programs. The methods course should include training in techniques of integrating foreign language instruction into the overall elementary curriculum. Such a course should also be offered for elementary school teachers for recertification credit.
- *Native speakers.* As more foreign nationals move into the State, school districts have a growing pool of potentially qualified foreign language–speaking residents to use in the classroom. While these potential teachers must meet state teaching requirements, allowances should be made by the South Carolina legislature to let non-U.S. citizens teach within all of the State’s school districts.
- *Distance learning.* A strong interactive component is the key to a successful distance learning program, which a teacher reinforces with support materials. The Satellite Education Resources Consortium, a multistate collaboration including South Carolina, provides foreign language instruction via satellite. In 1997, the South Carolina Educational Television network began producing French, German, and Spanish series for the beginning-level student. The broadcasts feature native speakers and local school children. In 1998, a Latin series was also initiated at the beginning level. Such programs are effective only if the classroom teacher plays an active and supervisory role.

Teacher certification

Two critical issues are related to the certification of foreign language teachers: the need for more highly qualified and properly trained teachers and the need for standards-driven training. Both of these needs must be addressed on the statewide level.

Teaching foreign languages has been designated a critical-needs area. In order to meet the growing demand for foreign language teachers, the State must recruit many qualified individuals into foreign language teacher preparation programs.

The State also needs to increase its efforts to get qualified and properly trained native speakers of foreign languages into the classroom. These efforts should include lobbying for legislation to allow foreign nationals to become certified teachers.

Prospective teachers need a foreign language methods class that addresses the basics of standards-driven instruction for appropriate age levels. Candidates for teacher certification in foreign languages should acquire a high level of proficiency in their chosen languages. Study abroad in the target culture is recommended as a component of the degree program.

At the Crossroads: Teacher Licensure in South Carolina (1996) recommends that foreign language certification be K–12. Prospective foreign language teachers should receive training in the following areas:

- second-language acquisition theory;
- instructional methodology for dealing with diverse learning styles;
- specialized methodology for grades K–12;
- interdisciplinary approaches to foreign language education;
- the integration of the five goals of foreign language study: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities;
- the use of authentic foreign language materials in the classroom;
- the use of multimedia and computer technology; and
- specialized methods of assessing students.

Colleges and universities need to restructure teacher preparation programs to include the above recommendations. Preparation programs for all teachers should include a foreign language component. Although certification programs exist for French, German, Latin, and Spanish, programs are also needed in less commonly taught languages.

Professional development

Professional development programs for practicing foreign language teachers must include opportunities for these educators to keep up-to-date with theory and methodology in their field and to maintain and enhance their own language skills. Both the State and local school districts should provide leadership in planning, funding, and publicizing professional development opportunities for teachers. Professional organizations, colleges, and universities should provide the necessary programs:

- instruction via multimedia;
- distance learning;
- immersion programs;
- accessible summer programs;
- foreign study, subsidized through grants and by businesses, professional organizations, districts, the State, or foreign countries;
- recertification credit for foreign travel;
- teacher exchange programs;
- professional leave to upgrade language skills and teaching methods;
- leaves of absence for study;
- business-sponsored professional development;
- teacher-of-the-year awards and incentives;
- college-level courses;
- study grants and scholarships; and
- recertification credit for professional development experiences, such as participation in conferences and workshops sponsored by professional organizations.

“Professionals support their professional organizations.”—
Billie Edmonds, former SCOLT
Chair

Professional Foreign Language Organizations

American Association of
Teachers of French (AATF)
American Classical League
(ACL)
American Association of
Teachers of German (AATG)
American Association of
Teachers of Spanish and
Portuguese (AATSP)
American Council on the
Teaching of Foreign
Languages (ACTFL)
Classical League Association
(CLA)
Classical Association of the
Middle West and South
(CAMWS)
Modern Language Association
(MLA)
National Network for Early
Language Learning (NNELL)
South Carolina Classics
Association (SCCA)
South Carolina Foreign
Languages in Elementary
Schools Network
(SCFLES.NET)
South Carolina Council on
Languages (SCCOL)
South Carolina Foreign Language
Teachers Association
(SCFLTA)
Southern Conference on
Language Teaching (SCOLT)
South Carolina Foreign Language
Teachers Association
(SCFLTA)

Student opportunities

Students need opportunities beyond the traditional classroom to practice language skills and develop a high level of proficiency in a foreign language. Extracurricular activities are also a good way to expose students to other cultures. Some recommended student opportunities include the following:

- a Governor's School for foreign languages,
- immersion programs;
- school exchanges, with appropriate credit given for subjects studied abroad;
- experiences as teaching assistants;
- study tours;
- business-sponsored work or study programs;
- career education with emphasis on careers available to persons who are multilingual;
- scholarships for study abroad;
- pen pals, via e-mail or traditional mail;
- guest speaker programs;
- cultural experiences;
- international days or weeks;
- interdisciplinary work;
- computer on-line communications;
- news broadcasts in the target language; and
- interactive multimedia.

Teachers working together

The Foreign Languages Curriculum Framework Writing Team and the Academic Standards Committee, the groups responsible for writing this framework, are an example of teachers from all levels of the education system working together to coordinate foreign language education. The team consists of teachers from elementary school, middle school, high school, and university programs.

Impact of a K–16 program

Standards-driven foreign language study affects the entire educational system. High school and postsecondary foreign language programs must be aligned to meet the needs of students who have already benefited from an extended and articulated sequence of study. Students who have begun foreign language study in elementary school need to be offered more advanced classes as they enter middle and high school foreign language programs. Different entry points must be established for students with different proficiency levels.

The South Carolina Council on Foreign Language Placement and Curriculum has created and is currently piloting placement tests that are designed to be administered by the State's colleges and universities to their entering students. These are contextualized, proficiency-based tests that promote articulation in the K–16 foreign language experience.

As existing foreign language programs are reevaluated and new ones are established, it is essential that teachers from all levels of the educational system be included in decision-making processes. Teacher involvement and interaction provide the best way to accomplish successful coordination of programs throughout a student's educational career, from kindergarten through college.